

{libfocus}

Video games and Libraries

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Guest post by [Eduardo Cruz-Palacios](#)



As you well know, books, libraries and librarians have always been together. With it, librarians concerned about preserving our written knowledge, they began to protect books with the aim of preserving our cultural legacy to transmit it to future generations by gathering, organizing and preserving what known. It means that libraries allow us to know who we are and where we come from.

Owing to technological improvements, specialization came to the book industry, so the capacity for book development was enhanced. So was the variety of books. Then, new documentation institutions emerged to preserve these books according to different needs (preserving the national bibliographic heritage, facilitating their access to local communities, supporting educational processes in universities, improving literacy skills, etc.).

Other kinds of industries were devoted to encode culture in a symbolic way and to "engrave" it in such different materials. Science and technology have always fostered the creation of those cultural artifacts in which human beings have made its own ideas be immortal. As the cultural industry does not cease to create, documentation institutions have faced all the subtleties of these new materials so that they have never neglected their mission which allows us to transmit our cultural legacy to our children. I am referring to photographs, music, movies, websites, digital books,... and video games.

Culture and video games

What is your favorite video game?

If you think that video games do not appeal to you, perhaps it is due to the fact that you have not enjoyed one a) that offers you the kind of stories that engross you; b) whose mechanics (set of rules) motivates you; c) with aesthetic patterns that reflect your personality; or d) "built" with technology that looks made for you.

Video games buffs are called nerds because of its connotations of weird or marginalised due to what the activity of playing video games involves: it is needed for gamers to be locked physically and cognitively to enjoy. However, this is not new. A reader that reads about reading will know that many stories lived through books were underestimated because they were considered imaginary, distracting and even dangerous. Conversely, nowadays, how we encourage people to read! :)

Today, a similar turning-point, but on how we see video games, is happening. Reports regarding video games and users' habits state some facts that mean video games are integrated into our culture (Asociación Española de Videojuegos, 2015ab. Spanish Association of Distributors and Publishers of Entertainment Software, 2011. Interactive Software Federation of Europe, 2011. PWC, 2011):

- More and more people videoplay.
- Factors such as sex, age, occupation or hobbies do not determine whether a person plays or not. Indeed, there always seems to be a video game for each person, as the specialization of video games industry has been creating such a varied range of this artifact.
- What varies is the habits: when, where, why, with whom and to what we video game. Personality and sociocultural experiences are useful to determine our favorites ones (sometimes we play one video game because our friends play, or their story has already thrilled us with a series of books or movies).

Let's look at these following images whose data being shown justify taking the integration of video games in our culture for granted. They concern the global, European and Spanish contexts, respectively. I am delighted to receive data about other countries.



Source: Asociación Española de Videojuegos (2015a).





Source: Asociación Española de Videojuegos (2015a).

From Libraries to Society

For libraries, video games must be resources for the accomplishment of its social purposes.

To begin with, the conservation of heritage. Libraries can assist in or even take charge of the preservation of these digital artifacts, which are representative of the culture we are. It is their experience in elucidating the relevant factors of documents, namely, the characteristics of formats, materials and contents, as well as in defining standards for the description and organization of knowledge what makes libraries be suitable agents. We find more reasons by considering libraries' methodologies for digital preservation that address a multitude of aspects (technological obsolescence, environmental degradation, metadata harvesting, several kinds of media, etc.).

In addition to this, making this cultural heritage accessible for community. They are capable of negotiating with the industry to make video games available at no cost to people. What is more, they can design spaces to use video games in a effective and comfortable way as it happens in reading rooms.

Moreover, as instruments to develop activities that strengthen the community relationships. One of the missions of public libraries, particularly local ones, is to strengthen the bonds of people by setting up programs that join people having common interests. Literary cafes, reading clubs, exhibitions, etc. There will be many more, why not with video games? Is this an opportunity to connect with people not reached and to strengthen intercultural bonds?

Furthermore, as something to be literate. There are many approaches to literacies, particularly I am focused on Multiliteracies view (Cruz-Palacios and Marzal García Quismondo, 2017). As for video games, we must take into account the importance of considering knowing how to "read" (to videogame); "write" (to design and to code); to communicate using (within games with other people) or about video games (understanding the medium: technology, history, mechanics, aesthetics or art); acting according to citizen values; and dealing with our emotions to avoid the problems that some people associate with video games.

Besides, as a field of knowledge. Libraries can gather and organize the best documents about games

based on its aspects or other resources' that deal with them: history, design, development software, art, guides to create, treatises or manuals of basic knowledge, "packages" of specialized academic journals, websites of companies, directories of professionals, etc.

Finally, as something to be made in libraries' makerspaces. Libraries could organise all resources what local community could need: space and infrastructure, technology (hardware and software), specialists, guides, etc.

Some examples

Videogame Lab on University California Santa Cruz (<http://guides.library.ucsc.edu/videogames>).

Computer & Video Game Archive on University of Michigan (<https://www.lib.umich.edu/computer-video-game-archive>).

Broward County Library (<http://www.broward.org/Library/MyLibraryOnline/Pages/VideoGames.aspx>).

University of Chicago's Library (<http://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/videogames>).

Console Living Room on Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/details/consolelivingroom>).

National Videogame Museum (<http://nvmusa.org/>)

Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) (https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2012/11/29/video-games-14-in-the-collection-for-starters/).

Greater Victoria Public Library (<https://gvpl.ca/using-the-library/our-collection/video-games>).

City of Melbourne's Libraries (<http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community/libraries/collections-elibrary/Pages/games.aspx>).

Bibliography, BBDD, journals, papers,... regarding video games selected by University of Michigan's Library (<http://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=282989&p=1885546>).

Library of Brooklyn's Game Center (<http://gamecenter.nyu.edu/academics/the-open-library/>).

The UT Videogame Archive on University of Texas at Austin (<http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/videogamearchive/index.php>)

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Asociación Española de Videojuegos (2015b). El Videojuego en España. Disponible en [consulta 21-06-2017]: <http://www.aevi.org.es/la-industria-del-videojuego/en-espana/>

Cruz-Palacios, E.; Marzal García-Quismondo, M. A. (2017). "Gaming para las Alfabetizaciones Múltiples: Videojuegos en la Educación del Siglo XXI". V Congreso Internacional de Videojuegos y Educación (Puerto de la Cruz, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, España, 7-9 de junio de 2017).

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